

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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R 151403Z AUG 76

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9124

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5387

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS SY

SUBJ: SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES STRAINING UNDER INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES GENERATED BY LEBANESE CRISIS

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES HAVE COME UNDER INCREASING CRITICISM FOR FAILING IN THEIR MISSION OF PROTECTING SYRIAN PUBLIC AND SARG LEADERSHIP FROM HOSTILE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS APPARENTLY OPPOSED TO SYRIA'S POLICY IN LEBANON. WHILE PRES ASAD AND HIS BROTHER RIF'AT HAVE NOT BEEN ATTACKED, ONE KEY SARG FIGURE HAS BEEN ASSASSINATED AND OTHERS HAVE NARROWLY ESCAPED DEATH. BOMBINGS AROUND CITY H AVE

POINTED OUT SEEMING INABILITY OF SECURITY FORCES TO PROTECT CITIZENRY; WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT THIRTEEN OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBINGS -- FOUR PALESTINIANS AND AT LEAST SEVEN IRAQIS -- HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS ALSO SUCCESSFULLY UNCOVERED SOME REPORTED OPPOSITION GROUPS AMONG OFFICER CORPS. SECURITY APPARATUS NOW UNDERGOING PERIOD OF EXPANSION WHICH IS STRAINING ITS

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MANAGEMENT. OPPONENTS OF REGIME HAVE TRIED TO

MAKE POLITICAL ISSUE OUT OF BRUTAL METHODS SOMETIMES EMPLOYED BY SECURITY PERSONNEL DURING THIS PERIOD OF INTERNAL TENSION. PARTIAL EROSION OF EFFECTIVENESS AND POLITICAL RELIABILITY OF SECURITY SERVICES ARE A PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF CONCERN FOR REGIME SO DEPENDENT UPON THOSE ORGANIZATIONS FOR ITS SURVIVAL. LATEST SECURITY MEASURES INCLUDE SEVERE RESTRICTIONS ON PERSONS TRAVELING BETWEEN LEBANON AND SYRIA AND ISSUANCE OF SYRIAN IDENTITY CARDS TO ALL REFUGEES FROM LEBANON. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING LONG MONTHS OF LEBANESE CRISIS EMBOFFS HAVE HAD NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES TO OBSERVE ACTIVITIES OF SYRIAN SECURITY PERSONNEL TO SAFEGUARD REGIME. WHILE SECURITY AGENCIES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN PRESERVING PERSONAL SAFETY OF PRESIDENT AND FOILING ALLEGED PLOTS AGAINST REGIME BY POTENTIALLY DISSIDENT ELEMENTS AMONG MILITARY OFFICERS CORPS, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN NOTABLY SUCCESSFUL IN REASSURING PUBLIC AND SARG LEADERS BELOW PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. ON CONTRARY,

AS DOMESTIC TENSIONS HAVE RISEN WITH RECENT SERIES OF BOMB EXPLOSIONS (DAMASCUS 5190) THEIR PERFORMANCE

HAS APPEARED INEFFECTUAL AND AT TIMES EVEN BUMBLING.

3. ORGANIZATION: SECURITY SERVICES ARE ORGANIZED AROUND PRINCIPLE OF MUTUAL COMPETITION. DIFFERENT BRANCHES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERNAL SECURITY, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE, MILITARY POLICE, POLICE, PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY, AND SO FORTH, SUPPLEMENTED BY ADDITIONAL UNITS IN RIF-AT AL-ASAD'S DEFENSE COMPANIES TO SURVEIL MILITARY AND ALAWITE COMMUNITY, PLUS ADNAN AL-ASAD'S STRUGGLE COMPANIES ASSIGNED AS FURTHER INNER CIRCLE TO GUARD PRESIDENT AND TO WATCH RIF-AT. EAST GERMAN EMBOFF TOLD US THAT PRES ASAD HAD AUTHORIZED ENLARGEMENT OF THIS APPARATUS RECENTLY AS RESULT OF GROWING INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES IN SYRIA. ACCORDING TO EAST GERMAN, MAJ GEN NAJI JAMIL, WHO ASSIGNED TASK OF OVERALL SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE COORDINATION IN PRESIDENCY, HAS NOT BEEN CARRYING OUT HIS RESPONSIBILITY LATELY

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IN EFFECTIVE MANNER. CONSEQUENTLY, NORMAL ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP AMONG SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS HAS INCREASED TO POINT WHERE THEY INVOLVED IN VARIOUS MACHINATIONS TO ARREST EACH OTHER AS "IRAQI SPIES", "PALESTINIAN SYMPATHIZERS" AND "POTENTIAL DISSIDENTS". EMBOFF PRESENT AT SITE OF RECENT BOMB EXPLOSION WITNESSED ONE SECURITY CAR AFTER ANOTHER DRIVE UP, OBSERVE WRECKAGE AND THEN CAREEN AWAY -- NEARLY RUNNING OVER ONLOOKERS IN PROCESS -- TO REPORT FINDINGS TO

APPROPRIATE SECURITY ORGAN. DESIRE TO REORGANIZE SECURITY APPARATUS MAY HAVE PROMPTED REPLACEMENT OF ALIZAZA AS INTERIOR MINISTER BY DIRECTOR OF INTERNAL SECURITY ADNAN DABBAGH. LEADERSHIP OF MOST SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS DOMINATED BY ALAWVBES, AND WE UNDERSTAND APIARATUS AS WHOLE FUNCTIONS TO SOME EXTENT AS EMPLOYMENT BUREAU FOR JOB-SEEKING ALAWITE YOUTH WITH MEDIOCRE SKILLS.

4. VISIBILITY: VISIBILITY OF SECURITY PERSONNEL HAS INCREASED MARKEDLY AS SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON HAVE BROUGHT SARG INTO MORE OPEN CONFLICT WITH LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND THEN WITH PALESTINIANS. SECURITY RANGE ROVERS AND DODGE CARRYALLS ARE REGULARLY SEEN NEAR IMPORTANT SARG BUILDINGS, A KEY INTERSECTIONS AROUND CITY AND ROVING ABOUT DAMASCUS A ALL HOURS. ACCORDING TO CHRISTIAN INHABITANTS OF DAMASCUS, THEY SEEM ESPECIALLY ACTIVE IN CHRISITNA QUARTER TO FORESTALL INCIDENTS DIRECTED AGAINST THIS MINORITY DUE TO EMOTIONAL CLIMATE GENERATED BY LEBANESE CRISIS.

5. METHODS: LATEST MEASURES TO INCREASE CONROL OVER POSSIBLE DISSIDENTS COMING TO SYRIA FROM LEBANON HAVE BEEN ISSUANCE OF SEPARATE SYRIAN IDENTITY CARDS TO ALL LEBANESE REFUGEES AND, MOST RECENTLY, PLACING HEAVY RESTRICTIONS ON PASSAGE OF PERSONS BETWEEN LEBANON AND SYRIA. IN ADDITION TO CLOSE SURVEILLANCE OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS AND USE OF "PREVENTIVE ARREST" AGAINST SUSPECTED OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME, SECURITY PERSONNEL ROUTINELY EMPLOY BRUTAL AND RELATIVELY CRUDE TECHNIQUES IN INTERROGATING DETAINEES. ASSASSINATION OF SOME KEY ALAWITE FIGURES IN HAMA RESULTED IN STEPPED-UP DETENTION CAMPAIGN IN WHICH MANY CITIZENS OF HAMA SUSPECTED OF BELONGING TO SECRET

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EXTREMIST MUSLIM GROUPS WERE TORTURED, SOME OF THEM FATALLY. WE UNDERSTAND FROM SYRIAN WHOSE BROTHER PICKED UP FOR QUESTIONING APPROXIMATELY MONTH AGO THAT PALESTINAINS REGULARLY DETAINED AND ROUGHED-UP. HE COMMENTED, " YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE SOME OF THE STORIES MY BROTHER PASSED CONCERNING BRUTAL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS." ONLY RECENTLY, HUNGARIAN ASSISTANT DEFENSE ATTACHE WAS BEATEN UP BY SECURITY IN APPARENT CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.
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6. EFFECTIVENESS: SECURITY HAS NOT BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE IN DEFENDING ALAWITE POLITICAL/MILITARY FIGURES FROM ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS BY EXTREMIST MUSLIM GROUPS (DAMASCUS 1039, DAMASCUS 4695). NOR DID FARFLUNG APPARATUS EMPLOYED MANAGE TO PREVENT ASSASSINATION OF BAATH PARTY NATIONAL COMMAND MEMBER AHMAD AZZAWI IN HIS OFFICE (DAMASCUS 4471). SUCCESSION OF BOMB EXPLOSIONS IN DAMASCUS (DAMASCUS 5190, 5270) PERHAPS SET OFF BY PALESTINIANS OPPOSED TO SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON. PLACEMENT OF BOMBS AT DAMASCUS FAIR AND IN ABU RUMMANEH SECTION OF CITY ASSURED PERPETRATORS OF EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY FOR THEIR DEEDS. SOME SYRIAN HAVE NOT BEEN SLOW TO GRASP POINT BEING MADE: SECURITY SERVICES DESPITE THEIR OMNIPRESENCE CANNOT GUARANTEE SECURITY IN DAMASCUS. ATTENDANCE AT MAJOR DAMASCUS TRADE FAIR HAS DIPPED FOLLOWING EXPLOSION THERE, AND SOME SYRIAN MOTHERS REFUSING TO LET THEIR CHILDREN PLAY IN PUBLIC PARKS OUT OF CONCERN FOR THEIR SAFETY. OTHER DAMASCENES APPARENTLY DO NOT PERMIT BOMBINGS TO ALTER THEIR DAILY ROUTINE.

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7. CONCLUSION. LEBANESE CRISIS HAS GREATLY COMPLICATED MISSION OF SARG SECURITY SERVICES. INFLUX OF LEBANESE, SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN REFUGEES NUMBERING ALMOST ONE MILLION INDIVIDUALS IN TOTAL HAS PLACED IMPOSSIBLE SURVEILLANCE BURDEN UPON SECURITY PERSONNEL. RANDOM BOMBINGS ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO PREVENT UNDER BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES IF SABOTEURS WELL-TRAINED TIGHT LIPPED AND LIMITED IN NUMBER. PRESIDENT AND HIS BROTHER SO FAR SECURE FROM ASSASSINATION. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS ALSO SCORED SOME SUCCESSES IN UNCOVERING CENTERS OF DISSENTION WITHIN OFFICER CORPS. BUT GROWTH IN SECURITY APPARATUS REFLECTS PRES ASAD'S BELIEF THAT PRESENT ORGANIZATION INADEQUATE TO CARRY OUT ITS MISSION; ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF SECURITY SERVICES APPEARS TO HAVE DECLINED IN PAST FEW MONTHS, HARSH METHODS EMPLOYED BY SECURITY PERSONEL CAUSING INEVITABLE BACKLASH AGAINST THEM AMONG PUBLIC. WE LEARNED FROM RELIABLE SOURCE WHO OBTAINED INFORMATION FROM PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN KHALID FAHUM THAT THIRTEEN OF THOSE ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBINGS HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED BY SECURITY. THIS NUMBER INCLUDES FOUR PALESTINIANS AND AT LEAST SEVEN IRAQIS AMONG WHOM WAS FORMER PLA SOLDIER CAUGHT WITH DYNAMITE STICK IN HIS POSSESSION. SECURITY OFFICIALS, NOT HOWEVER, RELEASING THIS INFORMATION BECAUSE THEY HOPE TO FOLLOW UP LEADS TO OTHER MEMBERS OF BOMBING RINGS TO WHICH THESE INDIVIDUALS CONNECTED. UNTIL THIS INFORMATION BECOMES PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, REPUTATION OF SECURITY SERVICES WILL CONTINUE TO DECLINE.

8. ASAD'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN QUICK TO SEIZE UPON ISSUE CREATED BY ACTIVITIES OF SECURITY PERSONNEL. THEY CLAIM THAT FACADE OF LIBERALISM ERECTED BY ASAD REGIME HAS NOW BEEN TORN AWAY AND ITS POLICE STATE UNDERPINNINGS EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW. PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANT WAS COMMENT BY LEADING DISSIDENT TO EMBOFF THAT SECURITY FORCES NOT IMMUNE TO POLITICAL CURRENTS FELT BY MANY SYRIANS -- OPPOSITION OF ASAD'S POLICIES IN LEBANON. IN SUM, DESPITE SOME SUCCESSES IN MILITARY AND INTERNAL SECURITY FIELDS AND EXPANSION OF SECURITY APPARATUS, THE FLAGGING MANAGEMENT OF SECURITY SYSTEM AND CONTINUATION OF INTERNAL

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CRITICISM DIRECTED AGAINST ASAD'S HANDLING OF LEBANESE CRISIS HAVE PARTIALLY UNDERMINED IMAGE, EFFECTIVENESS AND RELIABILITY OF ORGANIZATION WHICH VITAL TO REGIME'S SURVIVAL.
MURPHY

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